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Running head: DID YOU SEE THAT?

DID YOU SEE THAT?

An Exploration of Product Placement in Theatre

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Elizabethtown College

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Discipline in
Business and the Elizabethtown College Honors Program

May 10, 2019

Thesis Advisor, Dr. Bryan Greenberg

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryan Greenberg", written in a cursive style.



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ABSTRACT

Previous research on product placement demonstrates a connection between the placement and brand recall, brand attitude, and intent to purchase. Furthermore, this research demonstrates distinct differences in outcomes based upon the prominence of the product. The current study uses an experimental method to expand on this previous research by exploring product placement effects in a live performance setting. Results demonstrate significance in the relationship between brand recall and product congruency, recall and the interaction effect, and recall and perception of character. Future research should seek to expand this line of inquiry by exploring the connection between product placement perception and theatre engagement, the type of genre of the production the product is placed in, and how product placement differs across audience segments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

Product placement is defined as “the inclusion of a brand name, product package, signage or other trademark merchandise with[in] a motion picture, television show, or music video” (Cunningham, & Davtyan, 2016, p.3). Product placements have been around since the 1800s, but have appeared most recently in television and film (Hudders & Cauberghe, 2017). Recent growth in the use of product placements is likely due to its reach potential, opportunities to reach diverse audiences, and cost effectiveness (Marshall & Ayers, n.d.). In addition, the integration of product placements in film and television enables advertisers to avoid growing challenges facing traditional advertising, including zipping and zapping.

Defining Product Placement

A product must be mentioned and used with the intent to influence consumer behavior to be considered a product placement (Newell, Salmon, Chang, 2006). Some consumers view all products placed in films and television as product placements, even if they do not meet these two previously mentioned conditions. Often, in an attempt to make a scene appear more realistic, directors may choose to use a product, even if the company who owns the brand did not enter into an agreement to pay for the placement. Without this agreement there is no intent to influence behavior (Newell et al., 2006). An example of this was when a Jack Daniels whisky bottle was displayed in the background of *Mildred Pierce*, a film released in 1945 (Newell et al., 2006). Although the package labeled “Jack Daniels” was on a shelf in the background of the scene, the actors drank from bottles shaped differently than a Jack Daniels bottle. Further, Jack Daniels did not have an agreement to place their product in the film. Although this example was not evaluated in a study, it brings up the interesting question of false placements present in films. It is difficult for consumers to know if there is intent to influence behavior because they do not

have knowledge of any underlying transactions. The result is that consumers often believe there is intent to influence behavior even when such intent does not exist (Newell et al., 2006).

History of Product Placement

Product placement can be traced back to Edouard Manet's 1882 painting *Un bar aux Folies-Bergère*, which depicts Bass beer, noted by the distinct red triangle (Walton, 2010). In 1894, advertisements for Columbia bicycles and Piel's beer were incorporated into commercial films (Walton, 2010). Lumière Brothers integrated product placements into their films in 1896, featuring Lever Brothers soap logos throughout the productions (Newell et al., 2006). Edison films continued this trend, moving from tangible products to services, such as railroad transportation. They included short commercial-like advertisements throughout their films (Newell et al., 2006). These early occurrences of product placement in film were a way to subsidize the cost of production. The first notable and modern example of product placement was in *ET-The Extra-Terrestrial*, which was a film produced in 1982 (Marshall & Ayers, n.d.). More recent examples of product placement in film include Austin Powers, Black Panther, and Forrest Gump (Williams et al., n.d.). More recently, manufacturers became more involved by promoting the films in which their product was featured, such as Buick advertising films showcasing Buick automobiles (Newell et al., 2006). These advertising campaigns reinforced brand recall by forming a connection between the film and the product.

As the world of film moved to more realistic productions, by incorporating branded products, television moved to do the same. In television, production companies wanted to avoid using generic products in shows, so they started using realistic products, but slightly altered the name or appearance of products in television shows to avoid paying royalties. One notable placement was the pear computers that were used instead of Apple computers in Zoey 101 (Schneider, n.d.). As time went on, networks found they could receive money from these

placements if they included real branded products (Marshall & Ayers, n.d.). An example of product placement in television were the high-end products featured in *Sex and the City* (Dens, De Pelsmacker, Goos, Aleksandrovs, 2016). Due to the prominent role that luxury items play in the lives of the main characters, producers saw the need to feature actual products within the production.

Similarly to television and film, product placements can be heard when listening to music. As hip hop and rap became more popular, artists began including audio mentions of products to pay tribute to a brand or heighten their status as an artist (Ferguson & Burkhalter, 2015). Ferguson & Burkhalter (2015) state “these mentions have led to subsequent endorsement deals” (p.47). Artists do not initially receive compensation for mentioning products, but after some success, those artists are presented the opportunity to represent brands and receive compensation for mentioning the products in their songs.

As opposed to previously mentioned mediums, product placements play a lesser role in theatre. In theatre, placements are often based on what the character is wearing, such as Sarah Bernhardt wearing la Diaphane powder (Walton, 2010). While the product cannot be seen specifically, the audience is aware the actress is wearing it due to audio mentions of the product.

Product placements continue to become increasingly valuable due to new technology and commercial clutter. Recording capability on television allows zipping, or fast forwarding through commercials, and zapping, which is skipping to another channel to avoid the commercials altogether. In addition, as commercial time slots are decreasing in length, individual commercial lengths are also decreasing. A growing number of individual commercials are being included in commercial breaks, further contributing to commercial clutter.

Implicit vs. explicit

When it comes to how product placement has been studied, researchers have generally focused on how product placements interact with implicit and explicit attitudes, as well as on measurements of implicit or explicit attitudes. Implicit attitudes tend to drive spontaneous behaviors, compared to explicit attitudes, which are thought to drive direct behaviors (Madhavaram & Appan, 2010). Implicit and explicit attitudes are measured by specific tests. Explicit tests have been used in studies for a long period of time and therefore, are used more often in research studies (Madhavaram & Appan, 2010). The desire to research implicit attitudes arose because the traditional method of measurement resulted in a weak correlation between attitudes and behaviors (Madhavaram & Appan, 2010). Researchers decided there must be something missing, which led to the interest in implicit attitudes.

Implicit tests measure the impact of exposure by asking the participant to perform a task (Braun, 2000). An example of an implicit test is asking a participant to buy a drink, after priming the consumer with Coca-Cola. The test would examine which drink the consumer chooses to purchase.

Explicit tests, on the other hand, are direct measures of memory, such as recall where a participant is primed with a video showcasing Coca-Cola, then asked to list the product seen in the video. In addition to the tests, there are two types of explicit product placements, integrated and non-integrated. Integrated explicit product placements are incorporated into the content of the show. They are typically presented through visual and audible cues. Due to this, they are more likely to draw the audience's attention (Babacan et al., 2012). Non-integrated explicit product placements are less incorporated into the production. They are still prominent, but not well united with the ideas in the show (Babacan et al., 2012). Madhavaram & Appan (2010) believe implicit attitudes predict brand choice and are helpful in understanding the effect of

persuasive advertisements. These implicit placements are typically subtle, linger in the background, and are mostly used for contextual purposes (Babacan, Akcali, & Baytekin, 2012).

Benefits of Product Placement

Product placement is advantageous for advertisers due to their value and realism (Bellin, 2003). Product placement appears to have a diminishing cost per thousand because the placement lasts along with the production, and as such, every time the production is viewed, the CPM further decreases (Bellin, 2003). As the marketing director of Hawaiian Tropic states, “If you buy an ad in *TV* or a newspaper, it comes and goes” (Shermach, 1995, p.11), which illustrates how a product placement offers a benefit not offered by traditional advertising. He is happy to report his lotion appeared in *Baywatch* every week while the show was running and continues to appear even to this day (Shermach, 1995).

Another benefit of product placement is that viewers cannot skip over the placement. Viewers are unlikely to leave the room in the middle of a television show or movie, so although they may miss a commercial, they will not miss a product placement. In addition, when product placements are associated with a character the audience may see the product as an extension of the character, increasing realism and further connecting the audience to the product (Williams, Petrosky, Hernandez, & Page, n.d.).

Value

As stated above, a benefit of product placement is the value the company gains by using product placement, as the cost for product placement decreases over time because the placement is replayed in the specific medium continuously (Marshall & Ayers, n.d.). It is also relatively less expensive to advertise in some mediums because the base fee is based on the medium and the expected audience. Braun (2000) states, “A company can pay \$200,000 for a season’s worth of placements or \$475,000 for a single 30 second commercial within the same type of prime-time

programming” (p.2). Advertising agencies report that clients pay between \$20,000 and \$100,000 for all of their product placements in a single season of a television show (Schneider, n.d.). Some product placements are less expensive because instead of direct compensation they are only required to donate product. In 1995 Hawaiian Tropic reported, “product placement is only a small portion of Hawaiian Tropic’s marketing budget, but maybe that’s the beauty of it” (Shermach, 1995, p.11). Spending a comparatively small amount of money on a product placement allows the company to invest in other areas, while still having an opportunity to benefit from the placement. Another added value to the use of product placements is the international nature of the audience, which enables an advertiser to expand their reach (Marshall & Ayers, n.d.). As a result, companies can decrease their global advertising budget.

Realism

Product placement is especially important in creating a realistic world for the characters. In television and film the demand for realism increased in the ‘90s (Schneider, n.d.), and such realism is now expected in these mediums. Traditional viewers do not like seeing generic products used instead of real items. As Shermach (1995) states “generics distract viewers” (p.11). According to Schneider, viewers often feel insulted when a character uses an unbranded prop, such as a bottle of milk labeled “Milk.” The use of regional products also helps to establish location and time period, which offers a relatable context. It is important that the product fits the time period portrayed, otherwise viewers may find the placement odd (Schneider, n.d.). For example, if characters on *Little House on the Prairie* drank Coca-Cola, viewers may find it jarring, as the show takes place in the 1870s and 1880s (*Little House on the Prairie*), while Coca-Cola wasn’t produced until 1886 (Coca-Cola History). The issue of disconnect, whether it be in realism or some other factor, is an important consideration for marketers. Since the goal is to

build brand awareness and increase recall, anything that jars the audience in a negative way is problematic.

Cons of Product Placement

Although product placement has many advantages, factors such as lack of control, character association, frequency of placement, and viewer suspicion prompt marketers to be apprehensive of the benefits (Williams et al., n.d.).

Frequency & Waste

Audience perception is influenced by the number of times a product is shown and the length of the appearance. If a product placement is not displayed long enough the audience may miss the connection. It is common for audience members to overlook a single or sporadic product placement; it is also common for placements to have such a high frequency that they overwhelm viewers (Williams et al., n.d.). The number of times a product is displayed and the length of the placement are assessed relative to other placements (Williams et al., n.d.). If there are many placements in general, the audience may be less likely to get annoyed because they contribute it to the realism of the piece. If there is only one product placement, a high frequency will be more likely to upset viewers because it stands out. Finding the balance between these two levels of placement can be difficult, but researchers generally see low to moderate levels of repetition as increasing persuasion, with high levels of repetition leading to “boredom, wear-out, and consequently a decline in interest” (Ferguson & Burkhalter, 2015, p.49). Some researchers even consider excessive placements “an intrusion into the life of the viewer” (Williams et al., n.d., p.18). Due to an increase in product placements, younger viewers may be more likely to view placements as a normal part of film/television (Bellin, 2003). However, their experience could also lead to a decrease in effectiveness for product placements. For example, previous

studies have demonstrated that younger consumers recall brands from traditional advertisements more often than they recall brands from product placements (Bellin, 2003).

Another challenge for product placement is the issue of waste. The goal of any promotion is to reach as much of the target audience as possible, with the smallest amount of waste (Belch, 2017). But such optimal coverage is difficult to achieve. The most realistic scenario includes partial market coverage and some waste (Belch, 2017). Due to the nature of films, product placements often reach more than the target market because not everyone who sees a film will be interested in the same product (Belch, 2017). In regards to the theatrical medium, people who attend theatre productions may have similar tastes due to the desire to see a theatre production compared to a national film. However, theatre goers may be difficult to reach for other reasons. In 1995, it was discovered that those who attended theatre productions were not motivated to attend by theatre itself, but by a regard for high culture (Walmsley, 2011). Theatre consumers also desired the best value-for-money and value-for-time. These similarities in values and desire for high culture connect consumers who attend theatre, however, critics believe the high culture theatre consumers look for may prevent advertisements from reaching the consumers (Walmsley, 2011). They may expect a layer of realism when attending a show, so seeing a bottle of Coca-Cola on stage will not surprise or impact the consumer, or may not even have negative effects.

Backlash

Traditional audiences view films, television shows, and theatre performances to escape reality (Russell, 2002). Bringing product placements into these mediums could impact this escape, especially if the placement is received by audience members as an advertisement. Boerman et al. (2015) argues that a viewer who recognizes the placement as a “persuasion attempt” will try to resist or ignore it (p.199). This resistance is due to an inherent resistance to manipulation. Boerman et al. (2015) researched top-of-mind awareness and found it is lower

when a placement is disclosed to the audience compared to when it is not disclosed. As such, product placement works best when the viewer is unaware of the placement. Why is this the case? It is typical for viewers to resist persuasion because of the perception that it limits their freedom (Cauberghe, D’Hooge, & Hudders, 2017). An example of the type of backlash that can result occurred with the film *Skyfall*. Audience members complained when the first 30 minutes of previews consisted of advertisements (Cox, n.d.). Their frustration grew as the movie itself showed James Bond drinking Heineken beer instead of his traditional martini. Audience members took to Twitter to voice their complaints, which made producers wonder if the product placement was worth it (Cox, n.d.).

Placement Control

Another issue with product placements is the lack of control over where the product is placed. There is always the potential for the product to be used less than optimally by the production team, since the marketer has little control over the specific usage (Williams et al., n.d.). Connecting the product to a character or point in the plot that has negative connotations may result in negative attitudes toward the product.

Measurements of Product Placement Effectiveness

In order to gauge whether product placements are successful, researchers have developed a variety of measures. These measures generally fall under the following categories: attitude and behavior, brand awareness, brand recall, and memory.

Attitude & Behavior

Previous studies of attitudes focus on exploring the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB). TRA is based on predicting future attitudes and behaviors based on previous attitudes. TPB, on the other hand, is based on linking beliefs with behaviors. Before the 1950s, most studies did not find a significant relationship between attitude and

behavior. For example, a study in 1934 looked at the relationship between attitudes and behaviors toward Chinese couples in restaurants (Nan & Kim, 2012). While staff attitudes were negative, their actual behavior towards customers were positive. These results highlight the disconnect between attitudes and behaviors. As researchers began to adopt TRA, they found the terms studied needed to be more specific than in the past. For example, instead of measuring attitudes toward exercising, they measured attitudes toward exercising to lose weight in the gym (Nan & Kim, 2012). Creating more specific measurement helped limit outside variables and allowed researchers to measure the connection between the subject's attitude toward exercising and the subject's behavior. In a different approach, researchers studying TPB found a connection between a subject's perception of their ability to perform the behavior and the subject's attitude toward the behavior.

The most important criticism of these two theories is based on subjective norms. Critics suggest that although these theories suggest attitudes and subjective norms have influence on intentions, there are strong correlations between attitudes and subjective norms suggesting interdependence (Nan & Kim, 2012). This means positive attitudes have a positive relationship to positive norms.

Although TRA and TPB form a foundation for understanding behavior and attitude interactions, according to Ferguson & Burkhalter (2015), there is not enough research on behavior and attitude interactions as related to product placement. The research that has been conducted, however, supports notions that viewers are influenced by how the product is displayed in the placement. This research further emphasizes lack of control as a downside of product placement. Due to the importance of how the product is displayed and the fear it will be associated with a negative character or scene, some companies choose not to partake in product placements (Bellin, 2003).

There are three different types of placements that contribute to brand attitude (Dens et al., 2016). The first type of placement is look and feel, which have been shown to have a small effect on brand attitude and recall (Dens et al., 2016). The second type of placement is prop, which, as opposed to look and feel, are ideal for brand recall (Dens et al., 2016). Similarly, the third type of placement, interactive, increases a product's connection to the plot, improving brand recall.

In addition to the type of plot placement used, connection to the plot is a strong factor in brand attitude. This factor is important because if the product is connected in a negative way, it is anticipated to affect the viewers' attitude of the brand negatively (Dens et al., 2016).

Brand Awareness

One goal of a promotion is to inform the consumer of and make the consumer aware of the product being offered. Due to the importance of this goal, brand awareness is often studied. In previous research, brand awareness is evaluated based on a participants' top-of-mind awareness and likelihood to research the product further (Williams et al., n.d.). Product placements' effectiveness have often been attributed to the nature of the placement, such as the connection level to the plot and the prominence of the placement.

Connection to the plot is important because if the placement helps move the story along and plays a major role in the show, it has been discovered that this level of high connection will increase top-of-mind awareness and spontaneous awareness (Cholinski, 2012). High connectedness is defined as "constitut[ing] an important thematic element of the story, taking an important place in the story line or building the persona of a character" (Cholinski, 2012, p.15). If the placement is connected to the plot, it is likely the placement will go unnoticed as a persuasive tactic to get the consumer to purchase the product. Lack of awareness is important because, as previously mentioned, if it becomes apparent that there is a persuasive attempt viewers tend to react negatively (Cauberghe et al., 2017).

Prominence is also an important factor in product placements. There are two levels of prominence, subtle and prominent. These levels are defined differently depending on the medium the product is placed in. For example, in music prominence is measured by where the brand is mentioned. If the product is mentioned in the verse it is subtle, while a mention in the chorus the placement is considered prominent (Ferguson & Burkhalter, 2015). In other media, products in the background are considered subtle, while prominent products are found in places near the front of the shot (Cauberghe et al., 2017). Cowley & Barron (2008) defined prominence as “connected to the plot, mentioned more than once or were on the screen for more than five seconds, and were either audio or audio-visual” and described subtle placements as “visual, not related to the plot, and seen only briefly” (Ferguson & Burkhalter, 2015, p.48). It is important to note that while a prominent placement enhances brand awareness and recall, it may negatively impact brand attitude due to the persuasive nature of the placement (Cauberghe et al., 2017). Prominence can also be described by the type of placement. There are three types of placements, which include audio, visual, or mixed (audio-visual). Generally, audio-visual placements are considered the most prominent and most effective (Cholinski, 2012). Previous studies have shown that this type of placement is also the best for enhancing memory of a brand (Cholinski, 2012). Previous researchers suggest including the brand name in the placement to enhance brand awareness further, as some viewers may not notice the placement without the mention of the brand (Bellin, 2003).

Brand Recall

In addition to aiming to increase brand awareness, marketers also aim to increase brand recall. In the past, brand recall of product placements has been measured by administering a survey directly after playing a clip with product placements (Braun, 2000). Some placements include a disclosure that there will be a product placement in the show. These disclosures often

increase a viewer's brand recall because the viewer is more likely to actively search for products (Boerman et al., 2015).

Previous research also demonstrates the differences between recall and recognition. Recall is typically judged by asking viewers to name a brand shown, without offering any clues, while recognition refers to a viewer's ability to select brands they saw from a larger list of brands (Cunningham, & Davtyan, 2016). Some example questions for recall include "Now that you have watched the video, please indicate all product that you recall having seen during the video" (Cunningham, & Davtyan, 2016, p.83). An example question measuring recognition is "thinking about the program that you just watched, please indicate if you remember any of the following brands" (Cunningham, & Davtyan, 2016, p.82). Some recall is aided and some not. Aided recall consists of providing cue words or categories (Braun, 2000). Studies show recognition is higher when the brand is familiar because viewers are more likely to notice a brand they have heard of before (Williams et al., n.d.). This increase in recognition could have potential negative side effects, including the viewer perceiving the placement as advertising (Boerman et al., 2015).

Although the ultimate goal of increasing brand recall is to increase sales, that is not always the case. Studies have shown that brand choice does not change, even if a brand is recalled following the viewing of a product placement (Hudders & Cauberghe, 2017). Scholars determined there is a difference between recall and recognition when compared to buying behavior. Recall is found to be highly correlated to effectiveness in online purchases and recognition is highly correlated to effectiveness in regard to in-store purchases (Cunningham, & Davtyan, 2016). The actual purchase decision relies on social learning, which is measured by looking at attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. If these four processes are fulfilled, there is a strong likelihood the action will be repeated in the future (Bellin, 2003). This repetition of action is likely to lead to a stronger incentive to buy.

Memory

In general, studies of memory focus on two important effects to understand, primacy effect and recency effect. Primacy effect is the notion that items shown at the beginning are recalled easier, while recency effect is the notion that items mentioned at the end are recalled easier (Overstreet, Healy, & Neath, 2017). Overstreet, Healy, and Neath's study, which reviewed both previously mentioned effects, showed a significant relationship. The study consisted of providing participants with a known song and removing either the first, middle, or last word. Participants then needed to fill in the missing word (Overstreet, Healy, & Neath, 2017). The significant relationship was found between these effects and the difference between the first missing word recall. This research provides important information regarding possible effects on the placement of products throughout shows.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Previous research on product placement demonstrates increased levels of brand recall, brand attitude, and brand awareness when placement is used. Furthermore, this research demonstrates distinct differences in outcomes based upon congruency, defined as a product placement's compatibility with the show setting, and viewer's perception of character, defined as how favorable a viewer perceives a character. This current study seeks to expand on previous research by exploring product placement effects in a live performance setting. The following hypotheses and research questions will be explored:

H1: The more congruency in a product placement, the higher consumer brand recall.

H2: The more congruency in a product placement, the more positive consumer attitude score.

RQ1: Is there a relationship between congruency and intent to purchase?

Congruency is defined as a product placement's compatibility with the show setting, such as a coffee brand in a coffee shop. Previous research highlighted effects of congruency on both recall and attitude. Etienne Bressoud, Jean-Marc Lehu and Cristel Antonia (2010) found significance between congruency and recall. Based on the levels of the processing view of memory, the deeper the level of memory activated, the more efficient the material can be handled (Craik and Lockhart, 1972). Relating this concept to the current study, given Cholinski's (2012) results where a positive relationship exists between brand attitude and connection to plot, the expectation is that the deeper the brand's connection to the plot the deeper the level of processing. This expectation is due to consumer's need to find meaning. Cholinski's (2012) research also centered on the idea that connection to the plot allowed the product to be prominently featured in the film, which continued to bring awareness to the product. While there has been little research between congruency and intent to purchase, based on the nature of how

decisions are made, there is some evidence congruency enhances intent to purchase. How or if this occurs will be explored.

H3: The more positive an audience member perceives the character, the more positive consumer attitude score.

H4: The more positive an audience member perceives the character, the higher consumer brand recall.

RQ2: Is there a relationship between an audience member's perception of character and their intent to purchase a product featured in a product placement position?

Perception of character is defined as how a viewer perceives character favorability. Some research has demonstrated a correlation between show favorability and recall (Etienne Bressoud, Jean-Marc Lehu and Cristel Antonia, 2010). Applying this to specific characters, the expectation is that the more favorably the audience views the character, the more positive the viewer's attitude scores will be. Previous research explored placements in film and television and found a positive relationship with recall. Due to the realism and connection of characters in theatre, perception of character is expected to have a similar effect on consumer brand recall as it does on consumer attitude scores. Attitude scores and perception of character are expected to have a positive correlation due to the connection consumers form with characters in theatre productions.

METHOD

To test the previously listed hypotheses, an experiment was designed. Respondents were placed into four different groups and asked to complete a survey, observe a live ten minute show, and then complete three additional surveys. The groups were randomly assigned four different conditions:

Group 1: Nice Annie (character using product) and Tide (non-congruent product)

Group 2: Nice Annie (character using product) and Gatorade (congruent product)

Group 3: Mean Annie (character using product) and Tide (non-congruent product)

Group 4: Mean Annie (character using product) and Gatorade (congruent product)

Appendix 1 presents surveys utilized. Survey One consisted of questions focused on demographic information as well as information on engagement with theatre. In addition, respondents were also asked to rate their attitude of and likelihood to purchase a range of consumer products. Survey Two focused on evaluation of the specific show the respondents observed. Questions included attitude and relatability scales on the characters in the show. Survey Two also included unaided recall questions about a variety of items from the show. Survey Three began with an aided recall question with a list of items, both names of characters and products. Questions regarding attitude of and likelihood to purchase similar items listed in Survey One were asked in this section. The final survey, Survey Four, mentioned the featured product to gather the respondent's attitude to the appropriateness of the specific placement, and product placements in general.

RESULTS

The final sample consisted of 85 students from a small liberal arts college in south central Pennsylvania. The initial expectations of this research were separated into two main categories: congruency and perception of character. These two independent variables were tested against each of the three dependent variables: brand recall, attitude score, and intent to purchase. The interaction effect between congruency and perception of character was also evaluated.

Independent Variables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Congruency ▪ Perception 	Dependent Variables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attitude ▪ Intent to Purchase ▪ Recall
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Hypothesis One – Congruency and Brand Recall

Hypothesis One claimed participants viewing the congruent product, Gatorade, would recall the product at rates higher than those participants viewing the non-congruent product, Tide. The results were significant at the 10% level ($p=.082$), meaning that there was a significant difference between recall levels for viewers in the Gatorade group compared to those viewers who were in the Tide group. Participants who were in the Tide group had a higher recall than those who were in the Gatorade group ($M_{Tide}=1.59$, $M_{Gatorade}=1.29$). These results do not support Hypothesis One.

Hypothesis Two – Congruency and Attitude

Hypothesis Two claimed participants watching a show featuring a congruent product placement, in this case Gatorade, would possess a more positive attitude than that possessed by an audience member watching a show featuring a non-congruent product placement, in this case Tide. The results demonstrate that there is no statistical significance between the congruent and non-congruent groups on both an attitude-post measure ($M_{Congruent}=4.07$, $M_{Noncongruent}=3.86$; $t=-1.11$, $p=.270$) and an attitude differential measure ($M_{Congruent}=.10$, $M_{Noncongruent}=-.06$; $t=-9.60$,

$p=.340$). In addition, looking at pre and post attitude score separately, there is also no statistical significance within the congruent group ($M_{AttPre}=3.98$, $M_{AttPost}=4.07$; $t=-.813$, $p=.421$) and the non-congruent group ($M_{AttPre}=3.92$, $M_{AttPost}=3.86$; $t=.529$, $p=.600$).

Hypothesis Three – Perception of Character and Attitude

Hypothesis Three claimed participants would have more positive attitudes toward a product placement if the character engaging with the product was perceived more positively. Attitude was measured using an attitude differential score based on pre/post changes. The data suggests there is not a significant difference in attitude differential scores between those audiences who viewed a mean version of the main character and those who viewed a nice version of the main character ($M_{AttDiffMean}=.06$, $M_{AttDiffNice}=.00$; $t=.362$, $p=.718$).

Hypothesis Four – Perception of Character and Recall

Hypothesis Four stated that there was a relationship between how positively one perceives a character and their recall of a product placement. This relationship was tested by comparing both the nice and mean version of the main character, keeping other variables constant. There was a statistically significant difference between the recall of the product placement for the mean character group and the nice character group ($t=4.365$, $p=.000$). However, the hypothesis was not supported as the direction of the relationship was contrary to what was hypothesized ($M_{MeanChar}=1.82$, $M_{NiceChar}=1.13$).

Research Question One – Congruency and Intent to Purchase

Research Question One claimed participants viewing a production with the congruent product, Gatorade, would be more likely to state that they intend to purchase the product after viewing the show than those viewing the non-congruent product's intention to purchase that product. Using an intent to purchase post variable, there was a statistically significant difference between the congruent and non-congruent groups ($M_{Congruent}=4.22$, $M_{NonCongruent}=3.69$; $t=-1.864$,

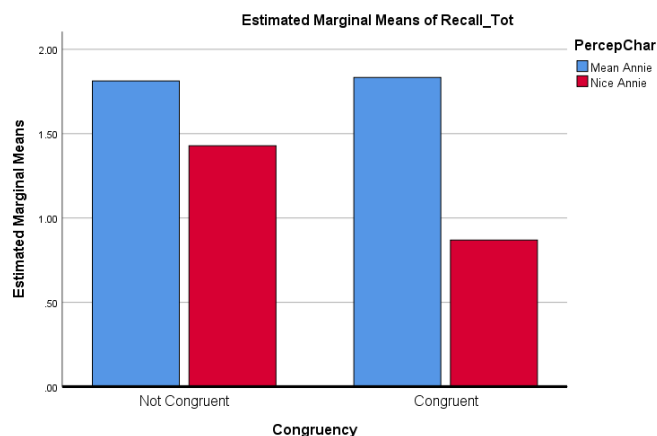
$p=.06$). However, when looking at an intent to purchase differential measure (post minus pre), there was no statistically significant relationship ($M_{\text{Congruent}}=.05$, $M_{\text{NonCongruent}}=-.06$; $t=-.506$, $p=.614$)

Research Question Two – Perception of Character and Intent to Purchase

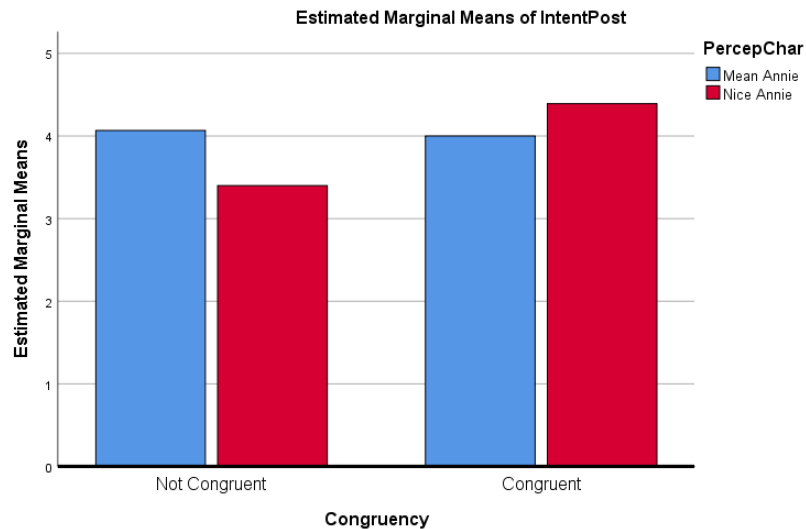
Research Question Two stated that participants in the group featuring a nice character would be more likely to state that they intend to purchase the product after viewing the show than those viewing the non-congruent product. When looking at the intent to purchase post measure, there was no statistically significant difference between groups ($M_{\text{MeanChar}}=4.03$, $M_{\text{NiceChar}}=3.93$; $t=.342$, $p=.733$). There were also no statistically significant differences when looking at an intent to purchase differential (post minus pre) variable ($M_{\text{MeanChar}}=-.12$, $M_{\text{NiceChar}}=.09$; $t=-1.036$, $p=.304$).

Interaction Effect & Recall and Intent to Purchase

Turning to the interaction effects when considering the impact of both independent variables – congruency and perception of character – results were mixed. With respect to recall, congruency and perception of character was significant at the 10% level ($p=.060$). In both the congruent and not congruent conditions, the product was recalled more when the participants viewed mean Annie ($M_{\text{ConNice}}=0.87$, $M_{\text{ConMean}}=1.83$, $M_{\text{NonConNice}}=1.43$, $M_{\text{NonConMean}}=1.81$). In addition as shown in the graph below, congruency had a greater effect on participants who viewed nice Annie.



The interaction effect between congruency and perception of character and intent to purchase was significant at the 10% level, ($p=.068$). This result means that there was a significant difference in intent to purchase measures between those in the congruent product and nice character group and those in the non-congruent product and mean character group. The graph below highlights the importance of congruency in productions containing nice Annie.



DISCUSSION

Looking at the results from a broad perspective, a theme that appears to run throughout is the role that uniqueness plays in product placement success, at least with respect to the measures utilized in this study. For example, the significant relationship found between congruency and brand recall were the opposite of what Hypothesis One suggested. The results can be interpreted to mean that the participants viewing the non-congruent product, Tide, had higher recall than those viewing the congruent product, Gatorade. Reviewing these results suggest consumers may be more apt to notice a product that stands out than a product that blends into the story line, even if the product does not appear to fit. Perhaps it is the fact that the product does not fit that leads consumers to allocate more time cognitively to processing information about that brand.

Similarly, when looking at the interaction of both independent variables – congruency and perception of character – results demonstrated more and larger differences in the interaction between congruency and perception when it came to the nice Annie group. Why might that be the case? The mean Annie group is more likely to stand out due to the behavior of mean Annie, similar in some respects to the function Tide, the non-congruent product, played. Since nice Annie is less likely to stand out, congruency becomes an increasingly problematic challenge. It appears that congruent products, contrary to some of the expectations this study is based on, are less likely to stand out. As such, a non-congruent product combined with the nice character serves to provide the audience with a signal that resonates and influences their responses on a variety of measures.

With that said, other results of the study lead to different takeaways. For example, while there was not a significant relationship between congruency and attitude, the difference in means of the congruent and non-congruent groups is important. The congruent group scored higher on attitude measures, which leads to a different result than what was discussed above. This result speaks to an important consideration for marketers, namely to find the optimal usage of product placement. While congruency may be beneficial in some cases and for some measures, in other cases and for other measures, non-congruency may be the preferred route. Similarly in some cases and under some conditions, attaching ones product to a ‘nice’ character may prove beneficial, but in other cases, the opposite may be true.

Another takeaway focuses on perception of character and brand recall. Previous research has shown an increase in recall when viewers find the show favorable, however this study’s results demonstrated the opposite. The difference in these results may be attributed to the focus on character favorability as compared to show favorability. This difference continues to

emphasize the effect of uniqueness of character in the show, as participants recalled the product more when viewing the show with mean Annie.

Additionally, the data did not show any significance in the comparison of perception of character and intent to purchase. This lack of significance is most likely due to the limitation of the definition of nice and mean, as described later in the limitations section.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the most challenging aspects of this study was obtaining an appropriate sample, both in size and representativeness. The population consisted of students from a small liberal arts college. Due to the demographic and psychographic makeup of the college, the sample size was limited. There was a lack of diversity in both race and ethnicity, as well as academic major, as the students were primarily white/Caucasian, and business majors. Due to this lack of diversity, the sample was not representative of the population. In addition, students do not reflect the primary audience that attends theatrical production. As such the generalizability of this study is limited.

Another limitation is the space in which the scene was performed in. Although all four groups saw the scene in a classroom in the same building, each classroom had a different set up of chairs, tables, and podiums. The differences in space could have influenced the ability of audience members to view the product used in each production. In all classrooms there was a table placed in front of the actors, which could have obstructed the view of the product if the actress held it against her hip. In addition, one classroom was set up to have three sections of students, one center, one to the right, and one to the left. The other classrooms were set up to have rows of tables facing the front of the classroom directly. There is also a question of external validity and generalizability since this study was conducted in a classroom setting, and not in the type of space in which theatregoers would generally view a theatrical production.

An additional limitation of this study was the manipulation of variables. One area explored in this study was how perception of characters could influence other variables. Perception of character was defined as ‘mean’ and ‘nice’, however there was evidence that viewers perceived the character in different and often conflicting ways. This limitation poses a question for future research focused on the interpretation of characters. The interpretation of character is different for different viewers, where one viewer may see a mean character as nice or vice versa. This interpretation difference highlights a potentially broader set of segments in the market. It would be beneficial to marketers to explore these segments of consumers including those who may view mean characters as nice and/or find such characters relatable. Better understanding the nuances between consumer segments provides opportunity for marketers to target these segments through different types of product placements.

With respect to future research, this study raises a number of interesting questions that could be further explored. One such question revolves around the viewer’s engagement with theatre. Because theatre is understood to be an art form, some people who associate with theatre may have strong feelings about product placement being used during a production. How these values could influence this sub group’s response to product placement, and whether they would respond differently remains to be seen. It would also be interesting to explore a viewer’s interaction with theatre, such as whether they observe or participate directly in theatre productions either onstage or backstage and how that could shape results.

Another interesting area to explore would be whether results differ based on the type of show. Viewers may react differently to a product placement based on their feelings of the type of show, such as a play versus a musical. An expansion of this question concentrates on the specific genre of show, such as realistic or fantasy. For example, *In the Heights* takes place in Washington Heights, New York, and centers around a bodega on the corner. This show could

lead to different results from product placements as the bodega sells everyday products, such as Coca-Cola and Snickers bars. However, this also raises additional questions. Although it is possible that viewers may feel that product placement is more appropriate in such productions, it is also possible that the effectiveness of such placements could be muted if the product is less prominent in the viewer's mind. Alternatively, a show such as *Seussical the Musical*, which takes place in the fictional world Whoville, may not be an appropriate place for product placement. Viewers may feel their fantasy world is ruined with advertisements if they watch a show taking place in a fictional world featuring product placement. Yet the fantasy aspects of such productions could allow brands to stand out, and it is possible that the right brand, utilized in the right way, could successfully be integrated in such shows. All of this points to a need to explore a variety of approaches to theatrical product placement to ascertain differences in effectiveness across types of shows, genres, and audiences.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Survey 1

Survey 1

1. Please specify your gender: (Circle the one you most identify with)

- Female
- Male
- Other: _____

2. What is your age? _____

3. Please specify your ethnic origin: (Circle the one you most identify with)

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other: _____

For the following questions **live theatre productions** include musicals, plays and one person shows seen in professional, campus, or other live settings. (This does not include such productions viewed on television, in a movie theater, or in any other digital format)

4. How many **live theatre productions** do you see a year? _____

5. How many **live theatre productions** have you seen in your lifetime? _____

6. For this question please rate your attitude towards different theatrical genres on a scale ranging from very negative to very positive:

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neither Negative nor Positive	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive	Never Viewed Live
Musicals						
Plays						
One person shows						

For the following question **live musicals** refers to shows with musical performances seen in professional, campus, or other live settings. (This does not include such productions viewed on television, in a movie theater, or in any other digital format)

7. How many **live musicals** have you seen in your lifetime? _____

For the following question **live plays** refers to shows without musical performances seen in professional, campus, or other live settings. (This does not include such productions viewed on television, in a movie theater, or in any other digital format)

8. How many **live plays** have you seen in your lifetime? _____

The following questions are meant to gauge general product preferences.

9. Please rate your attitudes towards different products on scale ranging from very negative to very positive:

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neither Negative nor Positive	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
iPhone					
Coca Cola					
North Face Backpack					
Monster Energy Drink					
Gatorade					
Tide Detergent					
Nike Sneakers					

The following questions are meant to gauge your intent to purchase the same brands listed on the previous page during the next six months.

10. Please rate your likelihood to purchase these products in the next six months on a scale ranging from very unlikely to very likely:

	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neither Unlikely nor Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
iPhone					
Coca Cola					
North Face Backpack					
Monster Energy Drink					
Gatorade					
Tide Detergent					
Nike Sneakers					

**Please place in envelope labeled goes Survey 1” and close silver clasp
to seal. DO NOT LICK.**

Survey 1 complete.

Appendix 2. Survey 2

Survey 2

1. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the show?

For the following questions we're interested in your thoughts on the different characters in the play.

2. Please rate your attitude toward each character featured on a scale ranging from very much dislike to very much like. *Please disregard personal preference for the individual playing the character and base your judgement on the character itself.*

	Very Much Dislike	Somewhat Dislike	Neither Dislike nor Like	Somewhat Like	Very Much Like
Female Character					
Male Character					

3. Please rate your relatability toward each character featured on a scale ranging from very unrelatable to very relatable. *Please disregard personal preference for the individual playing the character and base your judgement on the character itself.*

	Very Unrelatable	Somewhat Unrelatable	Neither Unrelatable nor Relatable	Somewhat Relatable	Very Relatable
Female Character					
Male Character					

4. Can you recall the names of the characters in the show? If so , write them here:

5. Can you recall any products featured in the play? If so, write them here:

6. Can you recall the color of the female character's shirt? If so, write it here:

7. Can you recall any locations mentioned? If so, write them here:

Please place in envelope labeled “Survey 2” and close silver clasp to seal. DO NOT LICK.

Open envelope labeled “Survey 3” and begin survey.

Survey 2 complete.

Appendix 3. Survey 3**Survey 3**

1. Do you recall seeing or hearing any references to the following in the production you viewed? Circle all you remember

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • Sarah | • Under Armour backpack |
| • iPhone | • John |
| • Annie | • Gatorade |
| • Nike sneakers | • Susie |
| • Tim | • Louisiana |
| • North Face backpack | • Monster energy drink |
| • Coca Cola | • Tide Detergent |

2. For this question please rate your attitude towards different theatrical productions

on a scale ranging from very negative to very positive:

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neither Negative nor Positive	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive	Never Viewed Live
Marry Poppins						
Peter Pan						
Les Misérables						

The following questions are meant to gauge the general product preferences of those who have or have not attended theatrical productions.

3. Please rate your attitudes towards different products on scale ranging from very negative to very positive:

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neither Negative nor Positive	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
Gatorade					
McDonald's French Fries					
Tide Detergent					
Monster Energy Drink					
Samsung Galaxy					
Coca Cola					
Nike Sneakers					

The following questions are meant to gauge your intent to purchase the same brands listed above during the next six months.

4. Please rate your likelihood to purchase these products in the next six months on scale ranging from extremely unlikely to very likely:

	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neither Unlikely nor Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
Gatorade					
McDonald's French Fries					
Tide Detergent					
Monster Energy Drink					
Samsung Galaxy					
Coca Cola					
Nike Sneakers					

Please place in envelope labeled “Survey 3” and close silver clasp to seal. DO NOT LICK.

Open envelope labeled “Survey 4” and begin survey.

Survey 3 complete.

Appendix 4. Survey 4 (Tide)**Survey 4**

In the production, the following product was featured: **Tide Detergent**

1. Please rate how appropriately the product fits the plot and setting of the production on a scale ranging from very inappropriate to very appropriate. *For example, a television set featured in a production taking place in a desert is inappropriate.*

Very Inappropriate	Somewhat Inappropriate	Neither	Somewhat Appropriate	Very Appropriate
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- 2a. Please rate how appropriate you feel product placement in theatre is on a scale ranging from very inappropriate to very appropriate.

Very Inappropriate	Somewhat Inappropriate	Neither	Somewhat Appropriate	Very Appropriate
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- 2b. Please explain why you answered question 2a the way you did.

Please place in envelope labeled “Survey 4” and close silver clasp to seal. DO NOT LICK. Please wait for further instruction.

Survey 4 complete.

Appendix 4. Survey 4 (Gatorade)**Survey 4**

In the production, the following product was featured: **Gatorade**

1. Please rate how appropriately the product fits the plot and setting of the production on a scale ranging from very inappropriate to very appropriate. *For example, a television set featured in a production taking place in a desert is inappropriate.*

Very Inappropriate	Somewhat Inappropriate	Neither	Somewhat Appropriate	Very Appropriate
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- 2a. Please rate how appropriate you feel product placement in theatre is on a scale ranging from very inappropriate to very appropriate.

Very Inappropriate	Somewhat Inappropriate	Neither	Somewhat Appropriate	Very Appropriate
-----------------------	---------------------------	---------	-------------------------	---------------------

- 2b. Please explain why you answered question 2a the way you did.

Please place in envelope labeled “Survey 4” and close silver clasp to seal. DO NOT LICK. Please wait for further instruction.

Survey 4 complete.